Firing by Pakistan along LoC

1512. DR. ALLADI P. RAJKUMAR: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Pakistani soldiers have stepped up their activities along the northern sector and fired artillery and mortar shells on Indian positions along the LoC in Kanzalwara and Machal subsectors of Kupwara district in the Kashmir Valley; and

(b) if so, the details of the provocative movements and the steps taken to maintain peace along the LoC?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) and (b) Firing by Pakistani troops across the LoC is mainly intended to provide cover to infiltrators. The general trend of firing is that it decreases during winter months, when passes become closed due to snow, and with the onset of summer it increases with increased infiltration attempts.

(c) Our troops are maintaining vigil all along the Line of Control and appropriate response is given to Pakistani firing taking due care that the incidents remain localised and our casualty is minimal.

Sanctions from USA

1513. DR. SHRIKANT RAMCHANDRA JICHKAR: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) the details of nature of our association with the USA in the area of defence;

(b) how will this be effected because of the impending sanctions from USA; and

(c) what steps are being taken to surmount this difficulty?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (c) India's relations with USA in the defence sector have encompassed three main streams i.e. bilateral security dialogue between the Ministry of Defence of India and the US Department of Defence, Service-to-Service interaction, and co-operation in defence industry and research and development. A structure has evolved over the last few years including a bilateral Defence Policy Group and, under its guidance, a Joint Technical Group and Service-to-Service Steering Groups.

Consequent upon the underground nuclear explosions undertaken by India on May 11 and 13, 1998 the spokesman of the US Department of Defence announced the cessation of all military exchanges with India.

Government believe that bilateral defence exchanges between US and India have always been based on the principals of mutual benefit and mutual respect. Extraneous linkages of any kind with such co-operation are unacceptable to India.

Joint operation in Andaman Islands

1514. SHRI AMAR SINGH. : Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) the details of arms and ammunition intercepted in a joint operation by the Indian Army, Navy, Air Force and Coast Guard on February, 1998 in Andaman and Nicobar Islands;

(b) whether Government are aware that this racket had been operating in Andaman Islands since long and if so, what is the main agency behind this racket and whether any arrest has been made in this regard; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) In a joint operation carried out by the three Services and the Coast Guard in Andaman & Nicobar Islands in Feb. 98, 73 persons were arrested and 138 weapons including A K series of rifles, rocket launchers, grenade launchers, carbines and about 40,000 rounds of ammunition of different kinds were seized.

(b) and (c) Attempts at smuggling of arms by some militant groups through gun runners are going on for sometime. Our forces and intelligence agencies keep a close vigil in order to curb such activities.

Since the investigation of the matter has been handed over to CBI and the matter is sub-judice, it would not be desirable to make any further comments or give details.

Resource crunch hurts Army

1515. DR. B.B. DUTTA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item captioned "Resource crunch hurts Army's war-fighting capabilities" appearing in 'The Times of India', dated the 6th May, 1998;

(b) if so, the facts alongwith the details of upgradation, modernisation and induction of equipment into the Army in the last decade; and

(c) the action plan of Government to upgrade and modernise the Army in keeping with emerging changes in military technology during the Ninth Plan period?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. The Government is committed to maintain adequate level of defence preparedness to meet any threat to national security and territorial integrity. Allocation to Army is made within the overall resource availability keeping in view requirements of national security and other sectors of defence and the economy. During the last decade, a number of proposals by the Army Hqrs for modernisation, conversion and induction of equipment have been approved and implemented. This is an ongoing process which would continue into the Ninth Plan.

Sub-standard medicines for Army Hospitals

1516. SHRI SANJAY DALMIA: SHRI SOLIPETA RAMACHANDRA REDDY: DR. MOHAN BABU:

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) the quality and value of medicines supplied to army hospitals in the country found to be substandard, expired and unfit for human consumption during each of the last three years;

(b) whether Government have conducted any enquiry in this regard;

(c) if so, the details thereof and the action taken by Government against the officials and the firms which supplied such drugs and have been playing with the lives of soldiers; and

(d) the other remedial measures taken in this regard, so far?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (d) In the CAG reports of the last three years such matters have been brought out. Action as required is being taken in respect of cases cited in the report.

Trishul Missile

1517. SHRI GOVINDRAM MIRI: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to pursue experiments with Trishul missile as a follow-up of recent Pokhran explosions;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) ongoing development flight tests of Trishul missile are not related to recent Nuclear tests at Pokhran.

(b) Deos not arise.